

To Whom It May Concern:

At the age of 38, I changed careers and went into the teaching profession for all the right reasons. After 20 years of being in education and working exclusively with at-risk students for my entire career (special education teacher, counselor and administrator at a continuation school), I retired in July 2010. Imagine my surprise when I discovered that I fall under the rules of the Government Pensions Offset and Windfall Elimination Act. Because of these rules, I will not be able to collect the social security system that I paid into for many years. If I decide to work at a job outside of education, I will have to pay into the social security system again, even though I will not be eligible for benefits. Even more painful is that I will be entitled to only a small portion should my husband pass away before me - and he has paid into the system for 30+ years.

Really, I try to understand how any of this makes sense. When I called Social Security to inquire about how this works, and I expressed my distress, I was told "to get over it". Would I have done things differently if I knew that I was going to end up with only 20 years of retirement from the California State Teachers Retirement System (not a full pension) when I actually worked for 30+ years? I truly don't know. But, I do know that I would tell anyone that is contemplating changing careers to think twice. How sad it is that people who decide to dedicate their lives to working with our youth are being punished when they reach retirement age.

Please support the repeal of WEP and GPO. Our students deserve to have the very best teachers – sometimes they come in the form of people changing careers!

Very truly yours,  
Rae Eckholm